

Raised Bill No. 5322: AN ACT CONCERNING THE CREATION OF A HUMAN SERVICES PERMIT AND A REQUIREMENT THAT SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS CONDUCT HOME VISITS DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Education Committee,

As a school social worker, I am in opposition of the bill that would require school social workers to make 2 home visits a year.

The first concern I have is in regards to time and resources. I am currently a 1/2 time school social worker in an elementary school and barely have time to see students on my caseload and connect with parents on the phone, never mind trying to leave the building. The time and resources it would take to make these home visits would take away from the counseling and crisis management services that are being provided on a daily basis in the school building. Social workers are not evenly distributed among districts either. Some districts have one for a whole district while others have one or more in each building.

Defining a school social worker's caseload is also tricky. I have some students I see informally and some with IEPs or 504 plans. Some I see regularly and some just as needed. Then there's another group of families who I support with a food program and other resources. Technically, I am available to all students who may need assistance every day.

I think there is value in home visits but not all families would welcome this type of service, nor is it necessary for everyone on our caseloads. Some families would refuse social work services if it meant someone would be visiting their homes. Home visits should truly be dependent on the needs of the families and students. Typically, home visits are reserved for families who can't otherwise connect with the school for other meetings or if the student has truancy concerns. The role of a school social worker is to address concerns as they are impacting school, not to see how they are functioning at home.

I think there's many factors to consider but in my opinion, the drawbacks outweigh the benefits and home visits should be on a case by case basis, not required for all. I oppose bill 5322 as it would add much more strain on school social workers who are already overwhelmed with their current job requirements.

Submitted by Lorinda B Spivey, MSW, LCSW  
School Social Worker